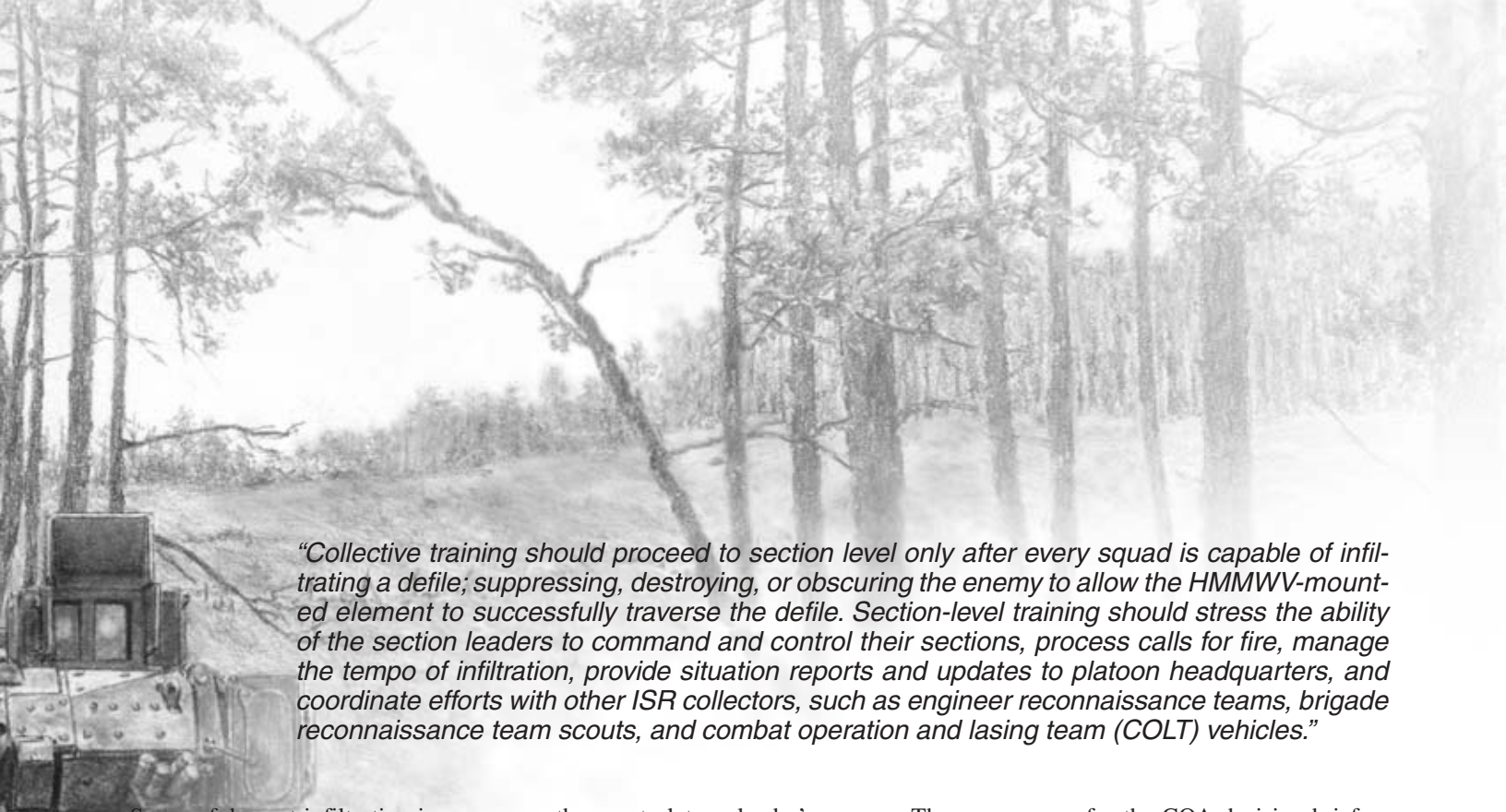
Successful Scout Mounted Infiltration

by Major O. Kent Strader



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Successful scout infiltration is a combined-arms operation**.** Defining infiltration is much easier than accomplishing it. Current trends at combat training centers show scouts attempting to penetrate a counterreconnaissance screen or defensive position without applying combined arms or reacting to contact, as prescribed in the mission training plan. Additionally, they conduct poor battle handover between elements and fail to template probable lines of contact or probable lines of deployment, resulting in unnecessary casualties. They also have poor crew coordination, which exacerbates their reaction to contact deficiencies.

Complicating the issues even further, battalion staffs typically expend very little energy on preparing the scout platoon for infiltration — intelligence officers usually do not plan redundancy or repositioning contingencies into their intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations. Furthermore, scouts habitually underutilize dismounts to clear terrain ahead of their trucks.

This article is intended to get all responsible parties involved in planning infiltration training and preparing the scout platoon for infiltration under combat conditions. This article addresses how the staff should prepare scouts for mission and combined-arms infiltration training techniques.

Planning and Preparing

We begin with the battalion staff's responsibilities in preparing the scout platoon leader for the mission. Every staff member has something to contribute to the scout platoon leader's success. The battalion S3 is the scout platoon leader's trainer, and in most cases, his rater, and as such, he must take primary responsibility for the scout during the military decisionmaking (MDMP) process to ensure he is properly briefed and prepared for the mission, as well as properly trained. Nevertheless, the battalion executive officer (XO) synchronizes the staff's actions during scout mission preparation.

Before continuing the discussion on the battalion staff's responsibilities, it is essential that we first understand what scout platoon leaders need to prepare for the mission. Following the mission analysis, scouts should receive a warning order from the S3. The S2, with the aid of the task force engineer should prepare a detailed terrain analysis, an enemy situation template, and the most likely courses of action (MLCOA) and most dangerous enemy courses of action (MDCOA). Once the S2 has conducted terrain analysis to standard with line-of-sight analysis, terrain analysis, enemy situation template down to squad level, air avenues of approach (AAOA) with the aid of the air defense officer (ADO), and the MLCOA and MDCOA with the approved named areas of interest (NAI), he can begin troop leading procedures. Additionally, any known or suspected enemy locations that the brigade reconnaissance troop has identified must be annotated on the scout platoon leader's map board.

After the mission analysis brief is conducted and the reconnaissance warning order has been given to the scout platoon leader, he begins planning while the staff prepares for the COA decision brief or confirmation brief, as appropriate. Following COA approval, the battalion staff should prepare a reconnaissance and surveillance operations order (OPORD) under the supervision of the battalion XO, with each staff section contributing to the final product. Beginning with the staff principles, the S1 or S4, depending on who attends the MDMP, is responsible for advising the battalion commander of the scout personnel strength, as well as briefing the scout platoon leader on the status of casualties and replacements for the mission. The S2 should brief any updates to the ISR plan, NAI changes, and priority intelligence requirement (PIR) refinement. The S3 should brief the approved battalion mission statement, commander's intent, acceptable risk and concept of the operation. The S4 should probably brief refuel, refit, and rearm times and locations. The signal officer (SIGO) should brief the retransmission plan and line-of-sight (LOS) analysis to maintain uninterrupted communications, the redundant communications plan, and the no-communications contingency. The engineer officer should brief the enemy obstacle set, the anticipated reconnaissance objectives of the engineer reconnaissance teams (ERT), requirements for obstacle reports from scouts, and where the battalion's point of penetration is templated. The chemical officer (CHEMO) should brief the scouts on the enemy chemical capabilities, templated targets, down-wind hazard areas, and mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP).

The fire support officer (FSO) provides the most important elements of the re-

Scout Mission Preparation Checklist

- ❒ Commander personally gives the scout his intent, commander's critical information requirements (CCIR), and acceptable risk
- ❒ S3 provides a detailed ISR Warning Order or OPORD to include concept of the operation and PIR
- ❒ S2 provides enemy MLCOA/MDCOA, enemy situation template, friendly ISR locations and T/P
- ❒ S4/BMO provides maintenance priority, status, recovery plan, and resupply plan
- ❒ FSO provides target list and assets available
- ❒ ENG provides terrain analysis, obstacle template, and ERT locations and T/P
- ❒ ADO provides likely enemy AAOA, enemy most likely COA and counter COLT activity
- ❒ Medical officer provides battalion and brigade CASEVAC plan for scouts
- ❒ SIGO provides LOS analysis and lost and redundant communications plan
- ❒ CHEMO provides enemy chem/bio weapons capabilities, most likely COA, and templated targets
- ❒ Battalion XO synchronizes the efforts of the staff to prepare the scout platoon for the mission

Figure 1

connaissance and surveillance OPORD — the approved essential fire support tasks (EFSTs), the method to suppress, neutralize, destroy, and the requested delivery assets and volume of fire. Scouts must understand how EFSTs are refined, and which NAIs are associated with what targets and EFSTs and how. Beware — if the scout platoon is not involved in confirming or denying a COA, you are wasting your time sending him into sector. EFSTs are oriented on enemy formations and functions. But, until the scout can give the fire support element (FSE) a location, we must rely on the S2 situational template. The fact that battalions and brigades execute planned targets that have not been adjusted since the MDMP is a disturbing trend at the National Training Center.

Battalion staff officers must exercise preparedness, precision, and thoroughness while preparing the ISR OPORD. If the scout does not receive a synchronized and standardized OPORD, he will be ill prepared and die needlessly for want of information.[1]

Successful Infiltration

Planning is the cornerstone in any successful synchronized mission; however, the foundation is combined-arms infiltration training. My experience with infiltration training was learned by trial and error during 16 months of command at the Combat Maneuver Training Center, Hohenfels, Germany, as the chief of reconnaissance and regimental reconnaissance company commander, 4th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment, and as a scout observer controller at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California.

The first building block in night infiltration training is to conduct mounted terrain familiarization and identify all primary, secondary, and lateral routes throughout the training area. Combat crews that cannot be afforded this opportunity can benefit from new technological advantages, such as live unmanned aerial vehicle feeds to surmount this obstacle. Nonetheless, at home station our crews worked on crew coordination, terrain driving, occupying hull-down positions, and selecting hide sights. It is important to note, all our high mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) scouts had crew vehicle communications (CVC) helmets and 1790s (vehicle intercom systems), which enhanced crew coordination, produced a faster response to contact, and made orders between the driver, gunner, and vehicle commander clearer. It is my belief that the absence of the 1790 will be a significant detriment to scouts during infiltration. If our modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) were to support a 1790 for each scout HMMWV, the effectiveness of crews would double.

Infiltration training began with multiple integrated laser engagement system (MILES) gunnery. A game called "catch the cone" was developed in the regiment. This game accomplished several things; it developed crew coordination, it taught drivers to maximize cover and concealment, and it emphasized observation and gunnery skills. The objective of the game is to capture an orange traffic cone with a chemlite attached for night identification. Four or more vehicles would start at points one kilometer from the cone at 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00; or at 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, and so on, with a terrain feature of separation. The objective was to maneuver the vehicle without being detected using short halts, crew coordination, terrain driving, and superior gunnery to destroy other vehicles, or out maneuver them and get to the cone without being killed. This game enhanced crew pride and esprit and fostered friendly competition within the platoon.

The next step in the train up was night infiltration of a defile blocked by two BMPs or two tanks. The standard was a HMMWV scout squad, consisting of two dismounts and a two-man crew, who must identify the enemy and use lethal and nonlethal indirect fires to infiltrate through the defile without loss. Habitually, the dismounted scouts would be let off the vehicle at least four kilometers from the defile, out of sight and sound of the enemy's suspected screen line. They would then attempt to move undetected into the screen line and identify the overwatching vehicles, call for fire, adjust smoke or illumination, and identify any enemy dismounted observation posts. It goes without saying that the coordination between the crew and the dismount team was essential to the survival of the vehicle; however, the MTOE in most scout platoons supports six scout HMMWVs, plus two-man dismount teams. After the platoon leader receives the warning order from the staff, he must conduct a mission analysis and, if need be, tailor his task organization to support dismounted teams or obtain infantrymen from a line company as augmentation. Augmenting scouts with infantry must be a conscious decision undertaken by the chain of command, and should only be mission specific to avoid reducing the combat power of the rifle companies. Detachment of combat power must be weighed against scout survival and the commander's acceptable risk.

Collective training should proceed to section level only after every squad is capable of infiltrating a defile; suppressing, destroying, or obscuring the enemy to allow the HMMWV-mounted element to successfully traverse the defile. Section-level training should stress the ability of the section leaders to command and control their sections, process calls for fire, manage the tempo of infiltration, provide situation reports and updates to platoon

headquarters, and coordinate efforts with other ISR collectors, such as engineer reconnaissance teams, brigade reconnaissance team scouts, and combat operation and lasing team (COLT) vehicles. The juggling act of managing all this information is a fine art and requires a substantial amount of practice before a degree of expertise is achieved. Therefore, the training time allocated must be requisite to the level of expertise to be achieved.

Platoon training across a doctrinal front should be planned, resourced, observed, and controlled by the battalion S3 in conjunction with the Headquarters Company commander. The opposing force (OPFOR) should consist of a scout screen and a counterreconnaissance company minus. An adequate OPFOR for this mission might consist of a sister scout platoon with dismount teams; a tank platoon; a Bradley platoon, with an associated company headquarters; two to three point minefields; and two fire markers and observer controllers. The standard is the scout platoon leader systematically infiltrates his platoon, synchronizing lethal and nonlethal fires across a doctrinal distance, without being 65 percent below combat effectiveness. Tempo is imperative. Infiltrating all the vehicles at the same time is suicidal. Nonetheless, the trend is a broad-front simultaneous infiltration without effective command and control by the scout platoon leader, resulting in a maximum of one to two vehicles infiltrating successfully.

It is imperative that the scout platoon crosstalk, with the brigade reconnaissance troop platoon leader to his front, and establish an information handover line for command and control of the reconnaissance zone. A collective exercise at brigade level is highly recommended before a combat training center rotation or combat deployment.

I attended a very productive meeting for regimental and motorized rifle battalion scouts. It was a luncheon, which I coined a scout symposium, where we discussed issues relevant to scouts and shared and exchanged tactics, techniques, and procedures. My scout platoons and I were also invited to a symposium hosted by the Cavalry Branch, where U.S. Army Europe's brigade reconnaissance team commanders or first sergeants met via video telephone conference. This meeting, though a first, was a productive discussion and left me with the impression that divisions and brigades should consider the value of idea sharing with the scout community to enhance their effectiveness.

Reconnaissance sets the conditions for battlefield success. The key to winning the information battle is the scout platoon's ability to successfully infiltrate enemy defensive positions.

[1]U.S. Army Field Manual 17-98, Battalion Scout Platoon, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 10 April 1999, p. 2-2.

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Photo by SPC Mason Lowery